



## A WINERY BEFORE ITS TIME

This landscape emphasizes winemakers' ties with agriculture—and with the “other Washington.”

By Clair Enlow

**B**IOPHILIA” is the word of the moment in the ecocentric practice of Mithun, a multidisciplinary design firm in Seattle. It’s a holistic ideal: sensory richness, economy of means, and regeneration, and it’s also the theme of Mithun’s recent project, Novelty Hill • Januik Winery, in nearby Woodinville, Washington.

The hardworking winery and visitor spaces do seem to function seamlessly, like a healthy organism. There’s a strong modernist honesty about the industrial nature of the place. From the rotating crusher to the steel fermentation tanks to the oak barrels, the entire process of wine making is visible and accessible behind glass walls.

The bigleaf maple, *above*, a Northwest native preserved on the site, screens the winery from the road. Spiky horsetails stand up to the industrial concrete of the outer walls, *below*.



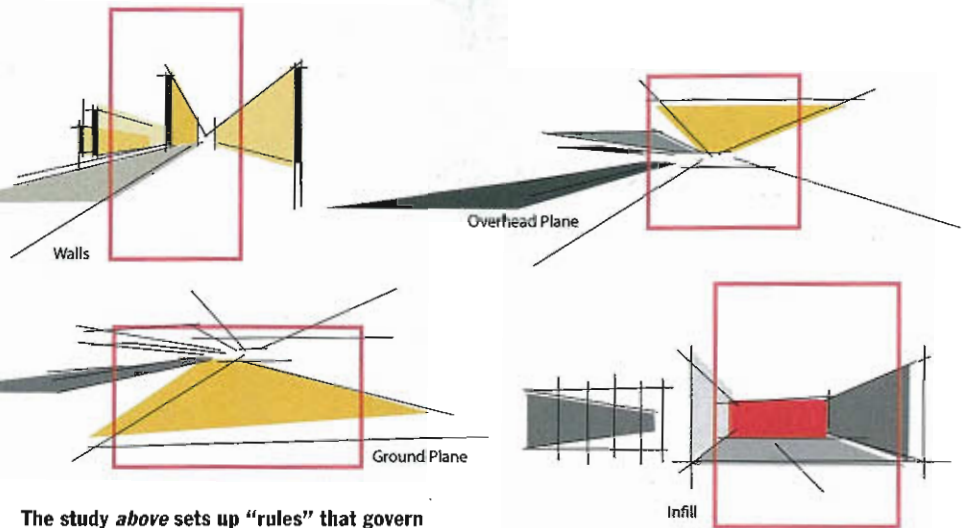
## DESIGN

It all flows together with the pleasures of the garden. Long, extended walls channel visitors outside, where they wander freely on scissoring terraces—pulling up chairs on the gravel under rows of ash trees, playing in the bocce court, and contemplating the not-so-distant wooded horizon.

Novelty Hill was founded by high-tech venture capital investor Tom Alberg and his wife, Judi Beck, in 2000. Mike Januik, who made wine for Chateau St. Michelle for a decade, crafts the wine for the Novelty Hill and Januik labels, both made on site.

When the owners and partners contemplated expanding and building on their site, they wanted the new winery to make the production process transparent so the wine could be experienced in a number of different ways.

They were committed to the idea of a “world-class garden,” but they wanted it to



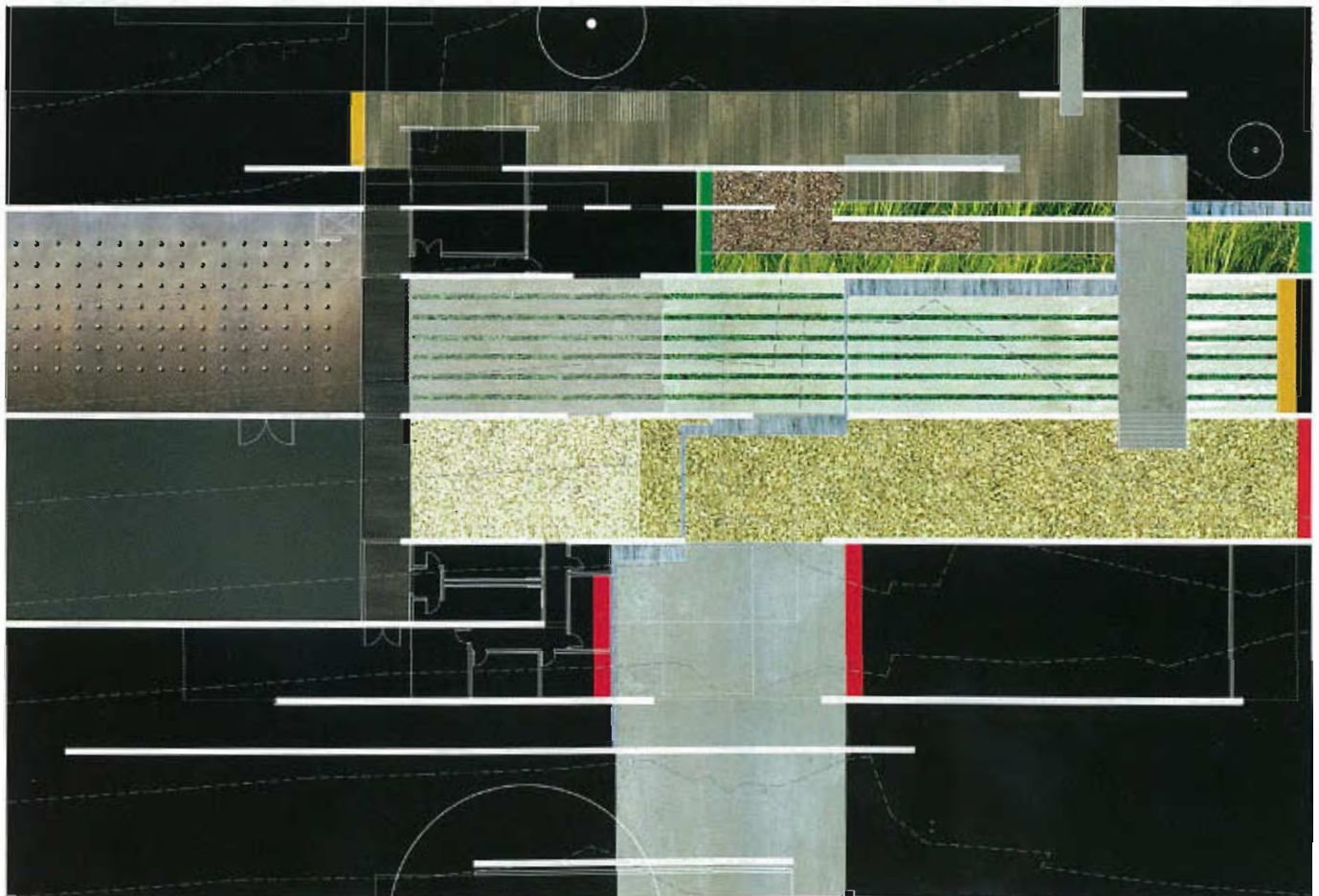
**The study above sets up “rules” that govern the design of interior and landscape so that they blend together as a contiguous whole. The garden, on the right, below, is a linear patchwork of color that evokes the fields and vineyards of eastern Washington.**

be welcoming and appropriate for the site. “No lavender or roses,” said Alberg’s daughter, Katherine Anderson, Associate ASLA.

Anderson arrived in Seattle shortly after

her father founded the winery, with a graduate degree in landscape architecture from Harvard. She helped to shape the project from the beginning, even before she landed her first job, with Mithun. She played an unusual role in the project, acting as design consultant and as client representative.

The long, 3.9-acre site is bounded by a major arterial on the long, uphill side and



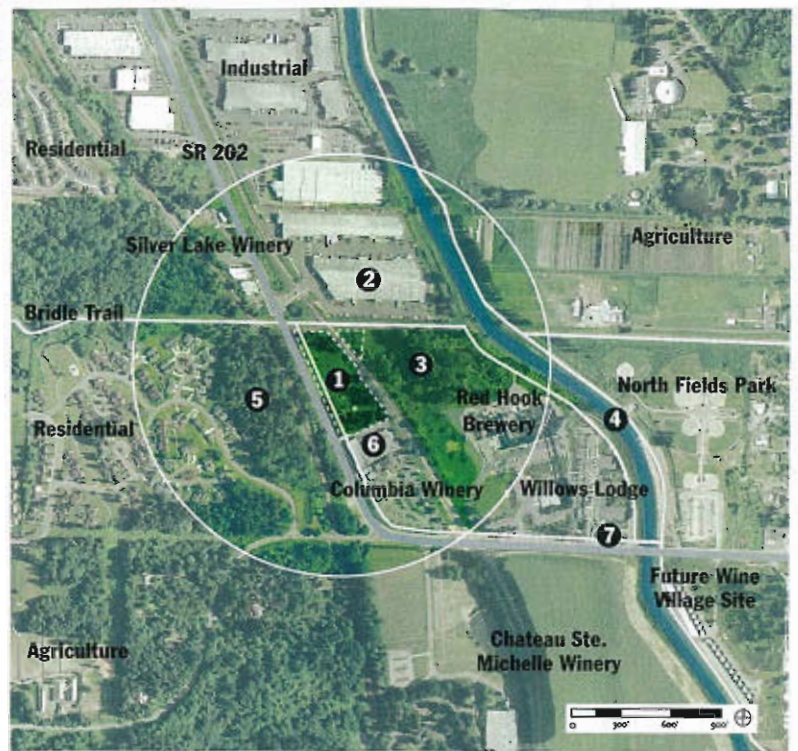
COURTESY MITHUN, THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE

The contextual planning for Novelty Hill Winery (1), shown in the aerial photo at right, sought to respond to industrial context (2), respect existing wetlands (3), improve water quality in the Sammamish River watershed (4), borrow views of wooded hillside (5), screen loading dock and noise (6), and connect to regional trails (7). Details can be seen in the plan below.

a semiwild creek bed and old train track on the other. Looming nearby at the north end is a bulky office-park-style building, and the warehouse and loading docks of Columbia Winery are just on the south side of the south property line. Despite the problematic near view, the design team decided to orient the building and garden to the south, primarily to catch the warmth of Northwest sunshine on the garden areas.

Parking is sunk into the upper side of the site along the road, visually sheltered by the road bank. From the driveway, trucks pass around the industrial end of the building on the north, carrying grapes to the giant steel crusher, which rotates like a front-loading washer within view of the back side of the building.

In their research for the building and the garden, the design team became interested in the relationship



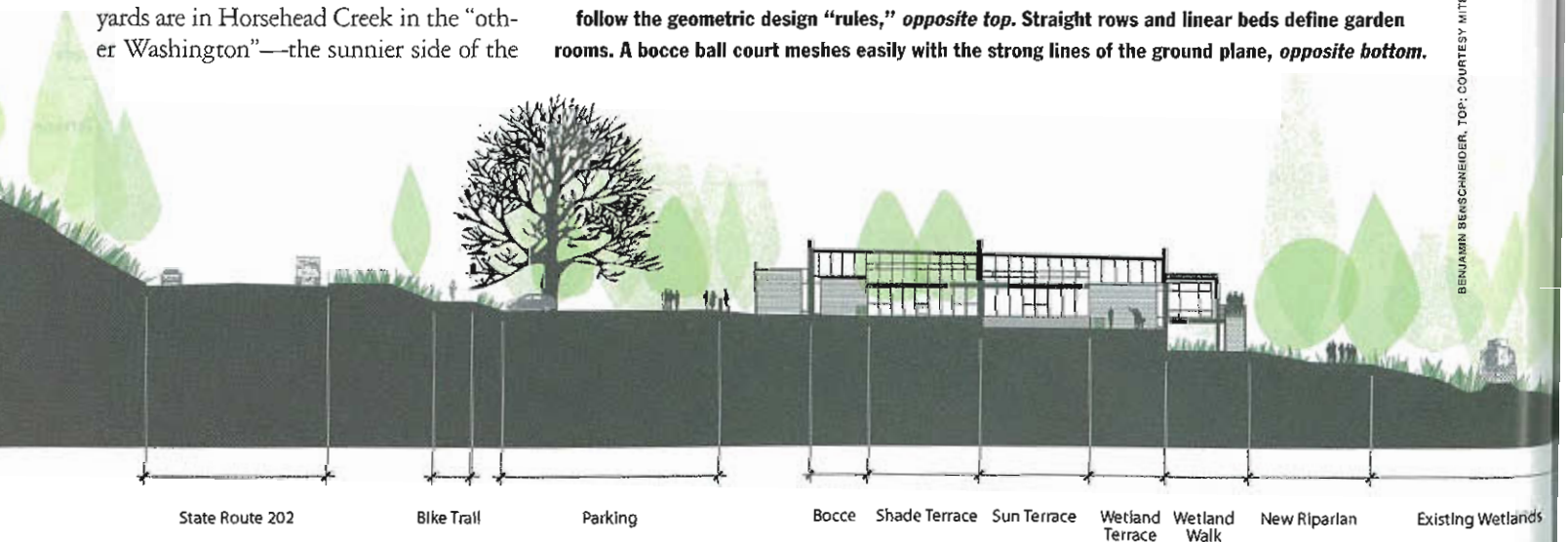
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between earth and wine, the terroir of wine lexicon. But the wine making is in a semi-industrial zone in Woodinville. The vineyards are in Horsehead Creek in the “other Washington”—the sunnier side of the

**The Shade Terrace, *above*, with its allée of green ash, sends a direct invitation to the tasting room just behind the glass walls. During most of the year, movable furniture spreads on the raked gravel beneath the trees. Terraces, *below*, accent the topography and invite wandering visitors. Plantings follow the geometric design “rules,” *opposite top*. Straight rows and linear beds define garden rooms. A bocce ball court meshes easily with the strong lines of the ground plane, *opposite bottom*.**



BENJAMIN BEWSCHNEIDER, TOP; COURTESY WITHUN, BOTTOM

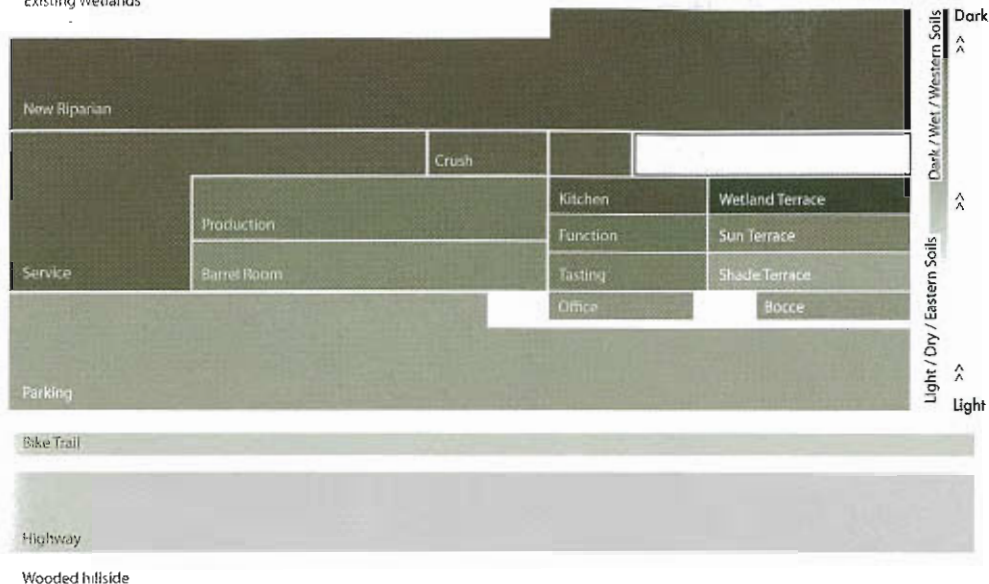
state. It was up to the designers to make the connection.

“We were trying to tell a story about here and there,” says Anderson. A token vineyard was out of the question. “No one wanted to plant grapes.”

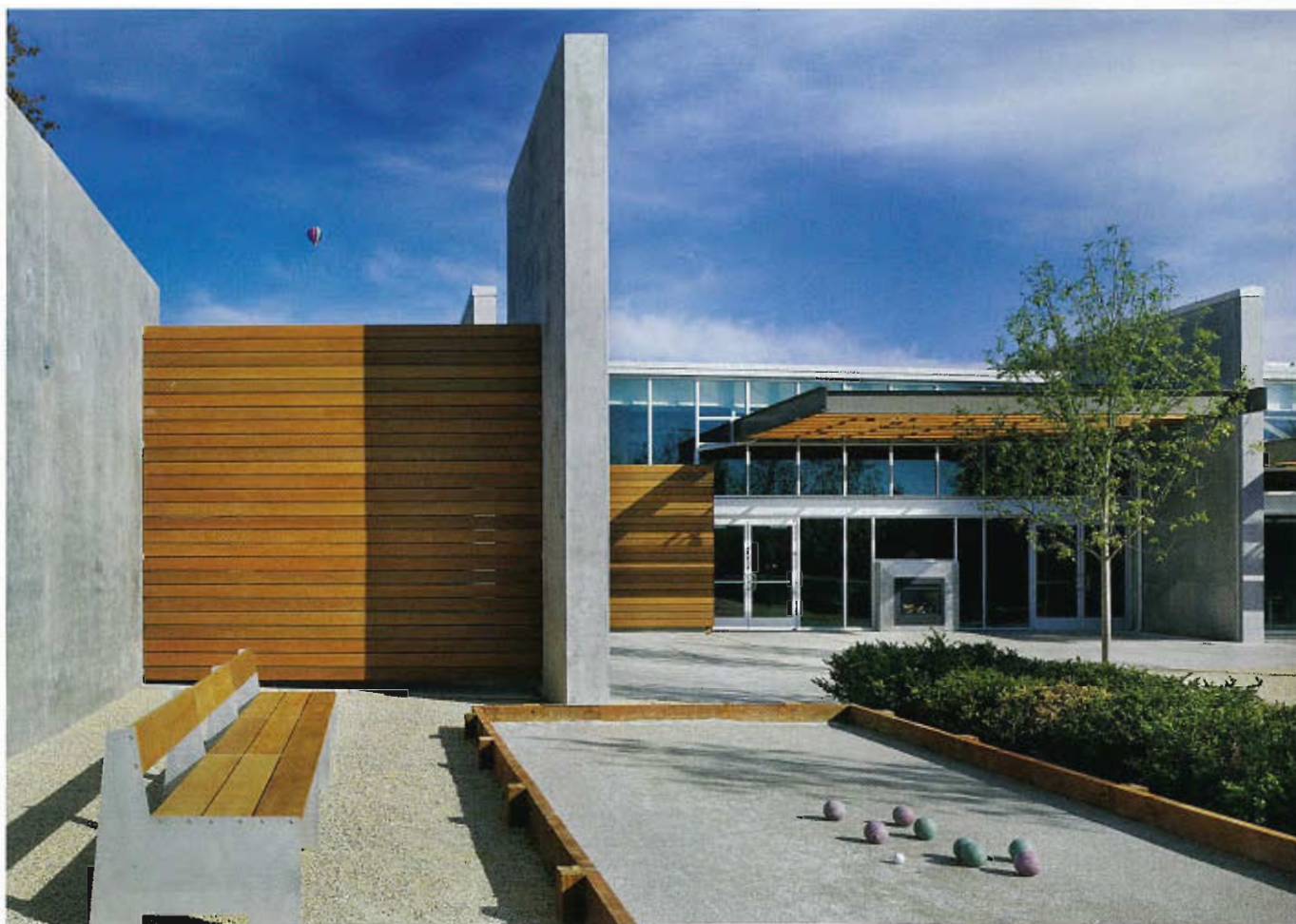
The terraces of the landscape, both level and sloping, flow down from a tall front wall to the restored wetlands below and evoke the low hills and agricultural environment of the “other Washington.” Flat ground planes serve to emphasize the horizon and the distance.

The straight, parallel lines of the open plan shift and extend from building into landscape, so that indoors and out flow between in an unbroken expanse. To realize the essentially modernist vision of the project, “We needed to constantly exercise restraint,” says Deb Guenther, ASLA, lead landscape architect for the design team at Mithun. “At every point, it was, ‘How can we make this even simpler?’”

Existing Wetlands



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COURTESY MITHUN, TOP: BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER, BOTTOM



The combined terraces of the garden area are the same width as the building itself. It's sheltered from the road by the freestanding concrete wall that extends from the building on the uphill side, with a welcoming break and trellis that allow visitors to come directly into the garden. Between low walls, a series of ter-

**The dark gravel of the wetland terrace, above, which overlooks the real wetland just off site, provides a long bench for easy perching. Seen through breaks in the long walls, below, the garden reveals itself to arriving visitors.**

aces invite exploration and contemplation. Alternately level and sloped, they lead down to the wetland on the other side of the site.

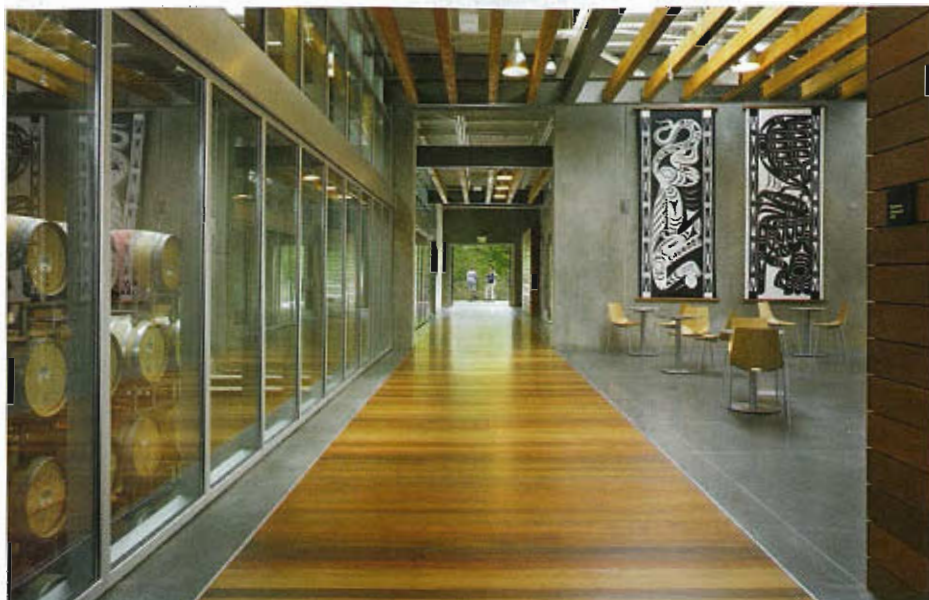
The terraces accent the topography of the site and evoke vineyard patterns. With contrasting pebble colors and concrete at each level, blocks of color also evoke the cultivated fields of eastern



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Washington. Varying in color from pale beige to buckskin to basalt, the gravels serve as mulch for the linear plantings while they define each ground plane.

Perhaps the most prominent of these planes is the shade terrace, with its allée of green ash trees and movable tables and chairs. Right above is the popular bocce ball court, with its simple evergreen hedge of Japanese holly and understory of native creeping raspberry. Below is the sun terrace, where rows of elfin thyme emerge from long narrow slits in a concrete hardscape. The sun terrace is bounded on one side by a raised water channel filled with salt-and-pepper basalt from the eastern Washington vineyard, evoking the irrigation canals and rocks found there. The last step in the sequence of garden rooms is the wetland terrace. With its dark gravel and red-twig dogwood, it overlooks the wetland itself.



Winery operations (barrels behind glass wall on the left, above) are clearly visible from hospitality areas on the right. Visitors circulate throughout, learning about modern and traditional wine making.

At the terminus of the sun terrace, a table fire pit made of recycled glass is an attractor in the landscape where people congregate on warm evenings. Views of the looming indus-

trial doors of a nearby winery are controlled with warm translucent panels at the ends of the long garden rooms and along the boundary of the property. At night, lights and shad-

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Visitors congregate easily on the Shade Terrace, which catches lots of Northwest sun in summer months.

ows play from behind the panels for an even more dramatic effect. Little gem magnolia, Leyland cypress, and hemlock are planted just beyond the panel wall, and they will grow to further obscure the loading docks.

COURTESY MITRUM

Biophilia aside, the garden is not naturalistic. Most plants stand in a linear pattern that complements the architecture. "We were trying to make the experience more about the space itself," says Guenther.

But nature is honored with a strong bias toward native plantings. Rodlike horsetails in front of the outer wall facing the road cast shadows against the long concrete wall while also hinting of the wetland environment on the opposite side of the site.

Red-twig dogwood is a hardy wetland plant that repeats in the plan. The red color recalls the color of the wine for which Januik is famous. It appears beneath the giant native bigleaf maple tree that was preserved between the building and the road. It's in the wetland terrace of the garden and again in the restored wetland itself. The restored natural area is also planted with vine maple, serviceberry, dogwoods, winter-hazel, and beaked hazelnut.

The low-maintenance landscape, with its fields of gravel and gaps in the hardscape, is designed for very low water use as well as minimal runoff. The adjacent wetland environment has been reconstructed using soils and plants from the site. Reduced toxicity is an overriding goal

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**Translucent red panels stop the eye—but not the space—at the end of the Shade Terrace. The device serves to screen a loading dock just across the property line.**

that supports the wine making process as well as the environment. The water channel uses an ozonator rather than chlorine to keep the water clear. Only dechlorinated water—not tap water—is used in the washing of barrels and tanks. No pesticides are used on site.

The winery's event calendar has been filling up with weddings and other parties as it gains in popularity. Love of life and love of the environment go hand in hand. **LAM**

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*Clair Enlow is a freelance writer in Seattle.*

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**PROJECT CREDITS** NOVELTY HILL • JANUIK WINERY, Woodinville, Washington (Tom Alberg and Judi Beck, owners). **Architect and landscape architect:** Mithun, Seattle (Paul Wanzer, project director and design leader; Susan McNabb, project architect and project manager; Kim Muniz-za, lead interior designer; Deb Guenther, ASLA, lead landscape architect; Katherine Anderson, Associate ASLA, project landscape architect). **Civil engineer and wetland consultant:** David Evans & Associates, Portland, Oregon. **Irrigation design:** Royal Waldock, Tacoma, Washington. **Contractor:** Walsh Construction Company, Portland, Oregon.